

Transition

Best Practice Update

Adult Education Transition Services

This months Update explains the new options available for students with disabilities ages 18-21

The need for alternative programming for students with disabilities ages 18-21 became apparent as improved transition planning and services by way of increased community experiences and functional curriculum resulted in student proficiencies, primarily in the areas of employment. School settings may no longer be the best environment for students who need services beyond what the school is capable of providing. However, the school provides a setting for services and options for students who are not able to access the adult provider system until the age of 21. The identified need to evaluate the collaboration of services resulted in dialogue between state agencies serving students with disabilities; Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Developmental Disabilities (DD), Medicaid and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Office of Special Education met to determine viable outcomes for students ages 18-21 who needed an environment other than the traditional classroom setting. The 55th legislative session (1997) included legislative intent written by Representative Bill Oban, which read:

SECTION 22. LEGISLATIVE INTENT - TRANSITIONAL SERVICES – DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED STUDENTS.

It is the intent of the legislative assembly that the disability services division of the department of human services, the office of special education of the department of public instruction, and local special education units explore opportunities for collaboration and shared funding in the provision of transition services to developmentally disabled students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one.

The following program, Adult Education Transition Services, is the outcome of this effort, and recognizes Rep. Oban's dedication and efforts to provide quality services to students with disabilities.

This program offers opportunities for students receiving special education to participate in adult services utilizing existing financial resources. It may be offered for individuals who have received maximum benefit from well-planned school-based transition programs and are ready to benefit from service approaches available in the adult service system.

The service involves voluntary participation on the part of local education agencies in order to use existing financial resources to the fullest extent without requiring controversial legislative proposals for enactment and to avoid financial pressures on the adult service system. Participation should encourage improvement of services within the education system and provides for a more meaningful beginning experience in adult services and should not represent a means of transfer of responsibilities between service systems.

The following descriptions refer to the student as 'participant' as the term 'student' implies continued educational needs rather than preparation for the adult settings. To participate on behalf of an enrolled participant, a local education agency (LEA) must agree to maintain the individual Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) eligible in their district in order to obtain foundation aid, and must agree to a foundation aid transfer to the Department of Human Services (Medicaid). Occasionally, it may be in the best interest of a LEA to further supplement funding to enhance service availability.

The DHS will then provide certain DD and VR services according to the IEP to students age 18-21 who continue to be enrolled in special education. The DHS will use the DD Home and Community Based Services Medicaid Waiver to pay for agreed upon services for those student services when the student has been determined eligible according to the procedures and the local school district has agreed to provide the state funding match for the Medicaid service.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION TRANSITION SERVICES

The following criteria must be met for a participant to be eligible for services:

AGE

An IEP team may consider this option for any participant receiving special education services who is at least 18 years of age and not more than 22 years of age.

GRADUATION STATUS

No participant can be a diploma graduate of the resident high school such that they are no longer eligible for FAPE. Any participant must be willing to accept an unsigned diploma and can participate in graduation as a social ceremony. The diploma will be signed upon completion of the Adult Education Transition Services or the age of 21. Potential participants severed from a school district via voluntary discontinuance, or graduation such that foundation aid is not available as the match for Medicaid HCBS Waiver funding, will not be eligible for funding from the DD service system until they reach age 21.

The team must complete an IEP transitioning from traditional IEP services to, and specifying the service of, Adult Education Transition Service and specify the LEA, DD/VR personnel and others who will participate in the IHP/IPE process.

LIFE CENTERED CAREER EDUCATION CURRICULUM/TRANSITION DOMAINS

The IEP must document participant need of, and exploration opportunities provided in, any or all of the following:

- 1) independent living;
- 2) jobs and job training;
- 3) community participation;
- 4) recreation and leisure; and/or
- 5) lifelong learning.

The Life Centered Career Education (LCCE) curriculum will be used as a guide and measure of the degree to which the school has addressed the functional domain(s) pivotal to transition planning and movement to the adult provider. The related curriculum available for credit which uses the concepts of LCCE is titled Functional & Community based topics in - Business Education (I, II, III), Traffic and Safety Skills (I, II, III), English/Language (I, II, III), Health (I, II, III), Daily Living (I, II, III), Math (I, II, III), Physical Education (I, II, III), and Social Studies (I, II, III). The LCCE curriculum is most appropriate because it:

- ✓ interfaces education with work;
- ✓ is seen as an infusion concept, it doesn't replace traditional education;
- ✓ requires a substantial experiential component;
- ✓ focuses on life and job skills promoting school to work within the community.

If a participant chooses to seek adult services through this program, there must be some evidence (individual level of proficiency) of related coursework in the Statement of Transition Service Needs (STSN) section of the Transition IEP. Examples might include -

- If the participant were seeking adult service provider assistance in Employment, the STSN would need to reflect some coursework in:
Work experience Vocational classes Language Arts/Communication
- If the participant were seeking adult service provider assistance in Recreation, the STSN would need to reflect some coursework in:
Physical Education Health Music/Art
- If the participant were seeking adult service provider assistance in Community Participation, the STSN would need to reflect some coursework in:
Social Studies Career Ed/Dev'l Work experience
- If the participant were seeking adult service provider assistance in Independent Living, the STSN would need to reflect some coursework in:
Consumer Science Math Health

From the coursework taken, the IEP team should be able to document to what extent competencies were demonstrated or evidenced (given individual circumstances and proficiencies). Not all competencies require demonstration. Additional skills can be targeted and further identified as demonstrated or evidenced (given individual circumstances and proficiencies). A list identifying the range of skills to be considered by the team is available from the LCCE curriculum and specific to the areas of employment, recreation & leisure, community participation and independent living.

TEAM EVALUATION PROCESS FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION

The IEP team should review the identified Post School Outcomes section of the IEP document for the individual in each of the domains and compare them to the individual's present level of performance. If the outcomes have not been attained, address the following questions:

- a) Has a sufficiently rich array of instructional and experiential activities been initiated? If so, what is planned?
- b) Are the activities appropriate means of development toward the identified outcomes?
- c) Have the activities been provided in environments and by methods that are appropriate and likely to promote development? How was the development documented?
- d) Are there activities and experiences from which the individual is likely to benefit most appropriately provided in a shared school and adult service system program?

If the answers to the above are 'yes', referral for AETS may be appropriate. AETS may also be appropriate if the individual's present level of performance meets or exceeds the Post School Outcomes and education services are likely to inhibit rather than promote further development.

At least six months prior to anticipated participation in AETS, the student must be referred to DD and VR. However, six months may not be sufficient advance involvement. Additional time may be required for completing SSI and Medical Assistance applications, there may be waiting or priority lists for services, or there may be other circumstances that will require a longer planning period. Insufficient lead time for involvement of VR/DD may result in waiting period for services.

The IEP team should document the transition services to date, the rationale and expected benefit to the participant, and the outcomes expected during the remainder of the time the participant would be eligible for FAPE.

The IEP team must complete an IEP transitioning from traditional IEP services to and specifying the service of Adult Education Training Service, specify the LEA, DD/VR personnel and others who will participate in the IHP/IEP process during the period of time the individual would be eligible for FAPE, and document shared responsibilities to enhance the participants experience. The described IEP, ISP and/or IRP will constitute the authorization for AETS and transfer of the foundation aid payment to the funding pool.

LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY (LEA) PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

LEA participation is voluntary--LEAs agree to authorize DPI to redirect foundation aid payments to DHS for matching Medicaid funds for participants included in the program. (The Medicaid match rate is re-determined annually and is approximately 70% for the 2000 - 2001 fiscal year.)

- LEAs electing to participate must involve staff in training sessions on transition planning and the purposes and procedures of this program. Training is available from DPI and DD.
- LEAs will involve DDCM/VR in the transition planning process for an individual as early as possible when it is anticipated this program may be used for an individual.
- Any of the entities participating in the AETS program for an individual may request an IEP meeting at any time.

REFERRAL PROCEDURES

When a LEA identifies a possible candidate for referral, the IEP team should convene and review appropriateness of the referral. At this point, the IEP team will need to include a VR counselor and DD case manager.

If the team decision is to proceed with referral, the referral should be made jointly by a Regional Review Team consisting of the Special Education Director, Regional DD Program Administrator and Regional VR Administrator to the State Level Review Team consisting of the DPI-Special Education Coordinator, DD Adult Service Coordinator, and VR Program Director. The State Level Review Team will determine if the referral is appropriate.

Upon determination that a referral is appropriate, the Regional Review Team will (if this is the first such referral for that region and participating LEA) coordinate training/consultation for IEP team members to include the prospective adult service providers.

The IEP team will then construct the proposed IEP/IPP (Individual Program Plan) and forward it to the State Level Review Team along with the LEA signed statement allowing diversion of the state foundation aid payment from the LEA to DPI/DHS.

Upon approval by the State Level Review Team, the DD case manager and/or VR counselor will authorize the appropriate adult service.

THE FUNDING POOL

The funding pool will consist of all foundation aid and other funds contributed by LEAs. DHS will use these funds to match federal Medicaid funds for provision of services or to reimburse providers with all state/local funds where a LEA elects to support an individual's participation when the participant does not meet requirements allowing access to federal match.

At a minimum, LEAs will contribute foundation aid payments. An initial rate for basic services will be set that will be covered with the foundation aid payments as the state Medicaid match. Basic services are limited to social/recreational support and/or day services.

A significantly increased cost for a more comprehensive service (such as residential placement or employment supports requiring supervision in excess of average levels) will require added contributions to the pool from the referring LEA.

The LEA will continue to provide the level of funding determined at the time of entry to AETS necessary to support the participant as long as the participant is of an eligible age for FAPE or until leaving the DD service system, whichever comes first. The pool will manage subsequent increases or decreases in rates for participant services.

DPI/DHS SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

- DPI/DHS will provide training and in-service to LEAs, regional office personnel and providers on the purposes and procedures of the program.
- DPI/DHS will devise accounting and authorization systems to enable the funding mechanisms.
- Regional VR/DD personnel will participate in IEP transition planning at the invitation of LEAs.
- Regional DD personnel will keep participating LEAs apprised of service availability in the region and the status of any prioritization that may be in place in the region for adult services.
- DHS/DPI will facilitate quarterly interagency review committee meetings.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The involved agencies will coordinate quality assurance mechanisms as necessary to meet applicable laws, regulations, and accepted practices. When an entity licensed by DD is providing service and the service is authorized for payment the DD case manager will conduct quarterly quality enhancement reviews--to include statements of desired outcomes and progress toward them--and make the information available to the LEA and VR (if involved). Each entity (LEA, DD, VR, adult service provider) will be involved as necessary in the plan development process (IEP, IWRP, ISP, and IPP) to ensure coordinated, effective service delivery. A standing committee representing DPI, LEAs, and DHS will meet semi-annually to review program policies, utilization, and financial standing. The State Level Review Team developed and uses a rating rubric to ensure quality and objective review of each referral to AETS. A form, *Adult Education Transition Services Match Funding Agreement*, is available to document specific service providers and funding amounts contributed.

In summary, the AETS was developed to create an opportunity for an IEP team to individually shape adult services within local communities for students who have maximized their education prior to eligibility into the adult DD system. This program allows for collaboration at the state and local level with necessary partners and also allows for fiscal collaboration using Medicaid funds. Tailored for individual needs, this program offers alternative and creative planning. The full document regarding AETS is available through the Office of Special Education.